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ABSTRACT

A key determinant of the persistence of preadult's political predispositions is the strength of the residues of preadult political socialization. Neither the strength of those residues, nor the impact of major socialization experiences on attitude strength, has been examined closely in the past. Political socialization proceeds through a series of periodic event-triggered occasions for political communication. The data for this study come from an investigation of preadults (aged 10-17) and their parents at the beginning and at the end of the 1980 presidential campaign, and a follow-up study one year later. By measuring attitude strength, affective intensity, attitudinal power and stability, domain differences, and the effects of family political communication versus political television exposure, a marked jump in the preadult's political socialization occurs, more so for younger children than older ones or for parents. Parental political socialization of children worked most powerfully on the younger children, while political television strengthened the basic political attitudes of the older children. A list of 84 references and 9 tables of statistics are included. (PPB)

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Presidential Campaigns as Occasions for Preadult Political Socialization: The Crystallization of Partisan Predispositions*

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Abstract

A central debate concerning political socialization revolves around the persistence of preadults' political predispositions, or lack of it. Persistence is usually indexed with the stability of the individual's attitudes across the life span; here we argue for examining the underlying strength, or crystallization, of those attitudes. We argue that political socialization proceeds through a series of periodic event-triggered occasions for political communication. Communication fosters attitude strength, measured operationally in terms of affective intensity, power, stability, and consistency. A presidential campaign provides an unusual opportunity for high levels of political communication, particularly concerning the candidates and, to a lesser extent, the parties and ideology.

The data come from a three-wave study (at the start and end of the 1980 campaign, and a year later) of preadults aged 10-17 and their parents. The campaign itself had particularly marked effects in informing younger children and strengthening their candidate and other partisan attitudes. It provided an occasion on which parental political communication strengthened children's attitudes, by promoting greater accuracy of children's perceptions of their parents' attitudes, and agreement with them. For older preadults, political television appeared to be the more effective vehicle for campaign-stimulated crystallization of partisan attitudes. The study provides evidence for discontinuous and domain-specific socialization processes, and provides an alternative research approach to the question of attitudinal persistence.

It was once said that the Jesuits could control people's thinking for life if they controlled their education up to the age of five. Similarly, it was said that "a man is born into his political party just as he is born into probable future membership in the church of his parents" (West, 1945). Racial prejudices, too, have long been thought to be formed through preadult experiences, with peers as well as parents (Katz, 1976; Harding et al, 1969). This assertion of the persistence of early learning (whatever its agents) has often been echoed by shrewd social observers as well as by social scientists: major religious, social, and political attitudes, many contend, tend to be stable through the life span, and therefore resistant to change at any given point in it.

It is an assertion that has been widely challenged in recent years, however, and it is that debate that triggers our research here. We suggest that a key determinant of persistence is the strength of the residues of preadult socialization. Neither the strength of those residues, nor the impact of major socialization experiences on attitude strength, has been examined closely in the past. This has left a lacuna in the debate on persistence, which we propose to address here.

The Question of Persistence

Early researchers on political socialization felt quite confident that most people's important political dispositions were set by early adolescence (Davies, 1965; Easton & Dennis, 1969; Hess & Torney, 1967; Hyman, 1959).

Assertions about the strength of the empirical case for this confidence varied widely. Some regarded persistence as at least partially demonstrated by such available data as adults' retrospective accounts of their own attitudes (Butler & Stokes, 1974; Campbell et al, 1960) or longitudinal studies (Bloom, 1964, p. 173; Feldman & Newcomb, 1969, pp. 320-322). Others simply assumed persistence (Davies, 1965; Dawson & Prewitt, 1969), were willing to accept it provisionally while acknowledging the absence of hard research (Easton & Dennis, 1969), or raised it as a research question (Jennings & Niemi, 1968; Langton, 1969).

This early enthusiasm for the persistence viewpoint was succeeded by an equally impressive backlash against it. Some resoundingly critical reviews appeared (see especially Marsh, 1971; Peterson & Somit, 1982; Wright, 1975; and more recently, Conover & Searing, 1987). They suggested that the assertion had simply been an article of faith, or that at best the evidence for it had been quite indirect. And a close look reveals that even those who had presented empirical evidence did not have overwhelmingly persuasive data. Hess and Torney (1967) had inferred it from a lack of change in marginal frequencies over the years of adolescence, and similarities in marginal frequencies between adolescents and adults; Hyman (1959) from the existence of persisting generational differences in adulthood; Proshansky (1966) and Greenstein (1965) from the existence in childhood of adult-like frequencies of racial or partisan attitudes; and Campbell et al (1960) from voters' claims about their memories of having had stable partisan attitudes over the years.

A priori faith in the persistence postulate, along with these hints of empirical evidence, had been sufficient to sustain a general belief in persistence, at least for a time. But embarrassing data began to emerge. Searing et al (1973, 1976) put forward data suggesting that "the primacy principle" and "the structuring principle" had been overstated. Long-term longitudinal studies appeared, implying that partisan tendencies change more after the preadult years than the persistence view would allow (Himmelweit et al, 1985; Jennings & Niemi, 1981). Voters' recall proved to underestimate substantially their attitude changes over the years (Markus, 1986; Niemi et al, 1980).

Early-socialized system support, which was thought to be the foundation of later citizen support for the regime, ran into trouble from several other quarters as well. A look at broader populations suggested less ubiquitously positive attitudes to begin with (Greenberg, 1970; Sears, 1975; Sigel & Hoskin, 1981). It proved not to be very stable among adults (Jennings & Niemi, 1981). It did not have the force on adult compliance to authority that it should have (e.g., Sears et al, 1978). It seemed hopelessly enmeshed with much more transitory attitudes about current incumbents and their policies (Citrin, 1974; Miller, 1974; Sears, 1975). Watergate, Vietnam, and other related troubles in the United States both produced more cynicism in the seemingly trusting generation initially studied, and produced more cynical subsequent generations of children (Sigel & Brookes, 1974; Sears, 1975). Indeed, the very generation of American children that had seemed so allegiant to political authority in early studies wound up rioting in the

streets of Chicago, smoking dope in Vietnam, or working as carpenters under assumed names in Toronto.

Party identification, the other pillar of the persistence hypothesis, stood up better. It continued to be quite stable in adulthood (Converse, 1975; Jennings & Markus, 1984), or even to strengthen somewhat (Converse, 1976). But it too had some rocky going. Children's partisan attitudes seemed to be weak and inconsistent (Vaillancourt, 1973). Experiences in early adulthood proved to alter party identification significantly (Markus, 1978). Europeans' party identification seemed much less completely formed by preadult socialization than Americans' (Budge et al, 1976). Finally and worst of all, young American voters simply stopped being so convincingly partisan (Miller & Shanks, 1982; Wattenberg, 1984), which implied that the earlier period might not have been so typical.

These empirically-based doubts about the persistence of early socialization residues have coincided with several theoretically (or quasi-theoretically) based challenges of the conventional wisdom in much of the discipline of psychology, that early experiences have special last powers. Some of the challenges come from the growing specialty of life-span developmental psychology: e.g., "The view that emerges from this [754-page handbook titled Constancy and Change in Human Development] is that humans have the capacity for change across the entire life span" (Brim & Kagan, 1980, p. 1). Others come from media observers, many of whom have felt that adults' attitudes, whatever their origins, were quite susceptible to influence by the electronic media, whether at the hands of the modern-day White House (e.g., Minow et al, 1973), of self-styled media experts

(McGuiness, 1968), or of the networks (Robinson, 1976). Still others come from the growing penetration of economic models into the study of political behavior. Rational choice theorists argue that even standing partisan preferences are responsive to voters' current calculations of their own and the national interest (e.g., Downs, 1957; Fiorina, 1981).

The revolution had bred a counterrevolution; "revisionism" came to be the mode of the day. Not only was early socialization not so terribly important, but perhaps people were constantly revising their thinking in some quite reality-oriented, sensible, realistic, data-oriented manner. Even some of the pioneers in political socialization research came to see a more limited role for the effects of preadult experiences in dictating adult behavior (e.g., Greenstein, 1974). Others fell back to what might be called an "impressionable years" revisionist position: childhood attitudes may not be very strong, and may not necessarily persist through adulthood, but they did tend to crystallize in late adolescence and early adulthood, and persist fairly strongly from that point (Jennings & Niemi, 1981; Sears, 1975).

Revisionists in academia rarely have things all their own way, of course. The data on which some of these challenges were based were not themselves unassailable. Some of the evidence on the instability of late-adolescents' attitudes came from the major longitudinal study of the day, the Jennings-Niemi panel study interviewing a national sample of high school seniors and their parents in 1965, and then reinterviewed in 1973 and in 1981 (e.g., Jennings & Markus, 1984; Jennings & Niemi, 1981). There, instability was most marked in the youth cohort's 17-24 age period. This cohort was itself quite unusual, living its formative years through the

decade of perhaps the most tumultuous social and political change since the Civil War. Much of the evidence of the lack of impact of socialization residues (Searing et al, 1973; Sears et al, 1978) rested on a small and flawed set of trust and efficacy measures in the National Election Studies.

And in the same era, other research gave some considerable reason to feel that persistence might be fairly substantial after all. Other researchers continued to emphasize the striking stability of certain attitudes through the adult years, particularly party identification and racial prejudice (Converse, 1975; 1976; Jennings & Markus, 1984; Kinder & Rhodebeck, 1982; Converse & Markus, 1979; Sears, 1981).

Moreover, the phenomena stimulating the original interest in political socialization remain with us. It is clear that racial attitudes and party identification continue to have major impacts on the political choices of Americans (Kinder & Sears, 1981; Sears, 1987; Carmines & Stimson, 1984; Wattenberg, 1984). Political ideology, whatever its cognitive ambiguities or idiosyncracies to the individual voter, remains a rather stable and powerful affective disposition (Levitin & Miller, 1979; Converse & Markus, 1979; Converse & Pierce, 1986). And who can read the daily news from Lebanon, the West Bank, Iran, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, South Africa, or Northern Ireland without feeling that nationalism, religious fundamentalism, and ethnic identity represent powerful affective commitments that endure over much of the life span? While the original form of the persistence hypothesis requires modification, the nature of those modifications remains an open question.

Assessing Persistence

What is the current status of research on the question of persistence? A review of this literature has recently been prepared (Sears, 1988), so here we will only touch on the main conclusions of that review.

Five general research paradigms have been used to address this question. The earliest studies relied heavily upon the citizen's own retrospective judgment of his or her earlier attitudes. Such evidence often led them to assert that attitudes such as party identification were highly stable over time (e.g., Campbell et al, 1960). These retrospections prove to overestimate stability by some considerable margin, as substantial evidence now indicates (e.g., Himmelweit et al, 1985; Niemi et al, 1980; Markus, 1986). This research has indicated that retrospective judgments about subjective political dispositions are not sufficiently accurate to serve as a reliable indicator of persistence.

A second indication of persistence would be that the presumed residues of early socialization influence adults' attitudes toward new political objects. Searing, Schwartz, and Lind (1973) called this "the structuring principle." The argument is that if predispositions are truly longstanding, they must be strong enough to control attitudes toward events, candidates, and issues appearing later in life. In their early test of this proposition, Searing et al (1973) correlated a long series of seemingly basic political orientations (falling largely into the general categories of partisanship and system support) with a series of policy attitudes. This yielded generally weak correlations (perhaps not too surprisingly, given the somewhat shotgun

quality of the approach), and they concluded that "the structuring principle" did not hold very powerfully. This effort was followed by considerable research focusing more narrowly on a shorter list of "symbolic predispositions" for which there is better reason to expect persistence: e.g., party identification, liberal-conservative ideology, and racial prejudice. These have had demonstrably strong effects upon policy preferences, voting choices, evaluations of political candidates, and attitudes toward political events (e.g., Kinder & Rhodebeck, 1982; Kinder & Sears, 1981; Levitin & Miller, 1979; Mann & Wolfinger, 1980; Sears & McConahay, 1973; Sears, Hensler, & Speer, 1979; Sears et al, 1980; Sears & Citrin, 1985). In our view, research using this paradigm has yielded impressive evidence for persistence, as long as it is limited to predictors that are plausible candidates for longstanding persistence, and steers clear of system support.

A third method of assessing persistence is cohort analysis. If the attitudes of two samples taken from a common birth cohort are roughly comparable at the two measurement points, one possible inference is that the individuals' attitudes have not changed very much (or at least not in a uniform direction). Cohort analysis has been the primary analytic technique used to test the "life cycle" hypothesis that stage-specific needs result in the adoption of particular political attitudes, frequently pitting it against the generational hypothesis that aging does not alter the dominant attitudes of a generation. In practice, such cohort analyses have usually yielded better evidence for generational than life cycle effects (Glenn, 1980; Miller & Shanks, 1982; Sears, 1975). This outcome is consistent with the

persistence notion, but is not a powerful test of it. The cohort analysis, at best, tracks the aggregated attitudes of an entire birth cohort, so inferences about the stability of individuals' attitudes are chancy. And cohort analyses by their nature are unable to unconfound period, aging, and cohort effects (Glenn, 1977; Mason et al, 1973), since only two independent variables (birthdate and time of interview) are available to assess these three effects.

The seemingly most appealing paradigm is the longitudinal study, in which the preadult child is tested and then interviewed again as an adult. Longitudinal designs have many advantages, of which the most apparent is that they yield the best single estimate of the stability of a particular individual's attitude over a given period of time. But despite their attractions, longitudinal studies have their limitations. Most obviously, such evidence is hard to come by. Moreover, longitudinal studies tend to confound the effects of aging with cohort and period effects. Any cohort that is tracked over time was born at one historical time and experiences just one unique historical period. Hence those interviewed by Jennings and Niemi were members of the famed postwar "baby boom" and spent their late adolescence and early adulthood in the midst of the Vietnam War, the women's liberation movement, the sexual revolution, the Watergate eras, and so on. One cannot isolate the effects of life stage from these external influences.

With that caution, what do longitudinal data show? The best data come from the Jennings-Niemi panel study. Their several reports gives substantial evidence of the incompleteness of political socialization at age seventeen, in that most political attitudes showed considerable instability during the

eight years following. Equally impressive, however, are those attitudes that show a high level of stability. Party identification is a clear example. Only 9 percent of all 1965 Democrats and Republicans in the youth sample had switched to the opposite party by 1973 (Jennings & Niemi, 1981). The second reinterview of the panel revealed considerably greater "hardening" of party identification in the younger cohort (no longer so youthful, of course) (Jennings & Markus, 1984). Similarly, the Newcomb et al (1967) twenty-year follow-up of Bennington College alumnae discovered impressive stability: their senior-year conservatism during the 1930s correlated +.47 with their 1960 conservatism and +.48 with the number of Republican presidential candidates supported in the interim. Shorter-term panels of adults reveal both very high levels of stability of dispositions such as party identification, ideology, and racial attitudes, and relatively low levels of others (Converse & Markus, 1979). Careful analysis of life cycle differences reveals that attitude stability increases through the early adult years, then levels off, giving support to the "impressionable years" idea (Alwin & Krosnick, 1988). Aside from that, perhaps the clearest conclusions from these studies are that some attitudes, which we have called "symbolic predispositions," show impressive levels of stability, whereas other attitudes do not.

A final paradigm tests attitude change in response to systematic pressure to change. When confronted with pressure to change, do basic political predispositions prove resistant, as the persistence view would suggest, or do they adjust and change, as the openness view would suggest? Such research requires naturalistic, quasi-experimental analogues of simple

attitude change experiments. Ideally, one would like to randomly assign respondents of a given life stage to varying degrees of pressure to change; however in practice that has rarely been done (Sears, 1986). Hence one must rely on natural quasi-experiments and post hoc controls.

A number of research literatures provide relevant evidence on this point, by assessing the effect of various possible influences upon adults' attitudes, particularly those stemming from (1) direct personal experiences, (2) emerging self-interests in particular political positions, (3) changes in one's location in the social structure, and (4) political events and communications about them. This is surely not an exhaustive list of possibilities, and there are shortcomings with each of these literatures. Nevertheless, by pooling the results from these several approaches we may maximize the "heterogeneity of irrelevancies," in Campbell's terms (Brewer & Collins, 1981).

Direct personal experiences with political matters, according to most psychological theories, ought to have a special potential for eroding the residues of preadult socialization. Unfortunately, all too few studies have been conducted on this question. One exception is the Jennings and Markus (1977) report on the 1965 high school seniors who subsequently served in the armed services in and out of Vietnam. In fact the Vietnam experience itself had only "modest" (in the authors' words) effects upon these youths' political attitudes. Changes in social location, such as geographical or social mobility do sometimes have major effects, but they occur most often early in the life span (Brown, 1988; Miller & Sears, 1986).

Self-interest has received more attention. Yet it too tends generally to have minor effects on the mass public's political attitudes. Examples include racial attitudes (Sears & Allen, 1984), economic judgments (Kinder & Kiewiet, 1979), and educational policy (Huddy & Sears, 1988). There are exceptions, such as tax policy (Sears & Citrin, 1985).

The "minimal effects model" of mass communication effect so popular nearly thirty years ago (Klapper, 1960) argued that the media usually reinforced, rather than producing major changes in, adults' established attitudes. This view came under considerable attack in the 1970s. Careful revisionist reviews were supplied by Comstock et al (1978) and Kraus and Davis (1976). But even they finally turned out not to argue that the media generally change strong attitudes very much. Instead, they emphasized media impacts on other dependent variables, especially information diffusion and "agenda-setting." Recent research has continued in the same vein. The media's persuasive impact on adults' attitudinal commitments still seems minimal, at least on the most important of their attitudes, even in today's much more refined and sophisticated research (see Kinder & Sears, 1985; Kraus & Perloff, 1985; McGuire, 1986). The media do seem successful in agenda-setting (Iyengar & Kinder, 1986) and in helping to form attitudes toward new objects (Orren & Polsby, 1987), but neither bears centrally on the question of persistence.

So, at least at some very crude level, some basic predispositions do appear to show high levels of persistence after late adolescence and early adulthood. The data are of course in most cases not completely adequate, there are exceptions, there is at least some modest revision of such

predispositions throughout life, there is a good bit of "error variance" (however unexplained variance is to be interpreted in this context), and this characterization could never be anything but crude. Nevertheless some combination of the "persistence" and "impressionable years" notions may describe fairly accurately the life course of that subset of political and social attitudes that are most important to ordinary people and most consequential for society.

Reconceptualizing Persistence

This discussion suggests three modifications in the persistence hypothesis in order to arrive at a more realistic version of it. One concerns the life stage at which persisting attitudes are presumed to have crystallized. Originally this was assumed to happen in childhood or early adolescence. However, more recent data suggests the continuing possibility of substantial change in late adolescence and/or early adulthood (e.g., Newcomb et al, 1967; Glenn, 1980; Jennings & Niemi, 1981; Alwin & Krosnick, 1988). So it is appropriate at least to raise the possibility that in some cases the "impressionable years" hypothesis may provide as good a fit with the data as the pure persistence hypothesis. Their relative merits remain to be ferreted out, however.

Second, this literature has assessed persistence simply in terms of attitude stability across some segment of the life span. However, observed attitude stability is a function of both pressure to change and resistance to change. Attitude change results when the pressure outweighs resistance.

Sometimes very strong pressure is required to overcome great resistance to change, as when the American public gradually but reluctantly became persuaded that Richard Nixon should be impeached as a result of criminal activity in the Watergate affair. On other occasions only modest pressure is required because of low levels of resistance to change; hence, quite superficial marketing devices can influence consumer choices when all competing products are essentially the same.

The literature generally has ignored degree of challenge to the attitude (though Converse, 1976, does contrast "steady state" eras with those in which the party system is in flux). Yet much of the interest value of the persistence hypothesis lies in the implication that early-socialized attitudes are intrinsically strong enough to resist later challenge.

High levels of observed attitude stability can be interpreted in two different ways, then. They could reflect strong attitudes, with considerable resistance to change, or simply a lack of pressure to change. So the strength of the underlying disposition, rather than mere observed stability, will be our focus here. As will be seen, we use four criteria for assessing the intrinsic strength of an attitude in public opinion data, affective intensity, consistency over variations in item wording, power to determine attitudes toward new objects, and short-term stability.

A third clear conclusion of this literature is that attitudes toward some objects are much more stable than are attitudes toward other objects. Early definitions of "attitudes" emphasized their enduring quality. They portrayed attitudes as stable dispositions to make a particular response to a wide variety of objects and situations (see Calder & Ross, 1973). And indeed

numerous attitudes are highly stable through adulthood (Converse, 1975; Converse & Markus, 1979). For example, longitudinal studies have demonstrated considerable stability over time for the two major partisan attitudes: Converse and Markus estimate (1979) two-year stability of the single party identification item at .81 during the 1972-76 period, and at .97 when it is corrected for unreliability. Liberal-conservative self-designation similarly is quite stable; (2) basic values such as individualism, egalitarianism, and post-materialism (Feldman 1983; Inglehart, 1985); (3) racial attitudes (Converse & Markus, 1979; Kinder & Rhodebeck, 1982; Sears, 1981); (4) political-moral attitudes, such as abortion, marijuana, and women's status; and (5) attitudes toward prominent public persons.

On the other hand, Converse (1970) challenged the generality of the early definition of enduring attitudes by demonstrating the very considerable instability of (6) some policy attitudes. In numerous other studies, substantially lower stability estimates have been obtained concerning policy issues, and (7) diffuse subjective system support orientations, such as political trust, political efficacy, political interest, and citizen duty (Converse & Markus, 1979; Jennings & Niemi, 1981). Such research suggests that a further distinction needs to be made before we proceed.

People can be highly committed to or ego-involved in some of their attitudes but not others. Individual attitudes can therefore be thought of as falling somewhere along a dimension of affective strength running from an enduring predisposition to a "non-attitude." In social psychological terms, they vary in commitment or ego-involvement (e.g., Sherif & Cantril, 1947).

The question of persistence is largely moot for attitudes at the "non-attitude" or low ego-involvement end of this dimension, since such attitudes are plainly extremely malleable. The question becomes interesting only for attitudes at the high ego-involvement end of this continuum.

We have used the term "symbolic predisposition" to describe attitudes at the high ego-involvement end of the continuum, representing strong affects that are conditioned to such symbols as "blacks," "liberal," "Republican," or "Communism." In a number of studies we have tried to (1) define what attitudes fit into this category for most Americans (Sears, 1983); (2) determine their impacts on policy attitudes and voting behavior (Kinder & Sears, 1981; Sears & Citrin, 1985; Sears, Lau, Tyler, & Allen, 1980); (3) determine their cognitive characteristics (Sears & Citrin, 1985; Sears, Huddy, & Schaffer, 1986); and (4) examine their persistence through the life-span (Sears, 1983; Miller & Sears, 1986).

It might be noted in passing that these symbolic predispositions generally have more societal and political importance than do most non-attitudes. They tend to reflect the most recurrent and controversial issues. They tend to focus on the issues that get the most attention from the media and in ordinary conversation. And they help people organize the ongoing flow of information concerning many different political and social issues. So an understanding of attitude change over the life cycle on these particular issues has some special practical political priority.

This discussion, then, suggests that in pursuing the question of persistence we focus our attention on a certain class of attitudes; namely, "symbolic predispositions." It suggests that we assess their intrinsic

strength rather than merely their observed stability over time. And it raises the question of whether that stength reaches some adult-like level in the pre-adult years, or only later when the person passes early adulthood.

The Role of Attitude Object

One of the most striking facts about persistence is how greatly it varies across attitude objects. Party identification is highly stable across considerable lengths of time, while at the other extreme, most people seem to respond to some policy issues (but far from all!) as if they were flipping coins. Let us add the possibility that attitudes toward different attitude objects reach adult-like intrinsic strength at different life stages. It might be, for example, that basic religious and racial attitudes are learned quite early, and esoteric political preferences much later.

To account for such differences across attitude objects, we have earlier presented a model whose primary thrust is that (1) specific attitude objects in the political arena have (2) general stimulus characteristics that, via (3) specifiable psychological processes, (4) determine attitude stability (Sears, 1983). The essence of this model is that strong learning of a particular affective response should make it more resistant either to systematic influence attempts or to random oscillation. This is likely to result from (1) <u>greater affective mass</u>, in terms of the volume of affectively-toned information upon which the attitude is based (see Anderson's, 1971, integration theory, or Converse, 1962); especially when it is (2) <u>one-sided communication</u>, i.e., when the individual is primarily

exposed to one point of view (as in "de facto selective exposure;" see Sears, 1968a); and from (3) overt practice, i.e., the more the person has practiced an overt response based on the attitude, the more stable it should be (see McGuire, 1969, on immunization; Janis, 1968, on role-playing; or Campbell et al, 1960, on the strengthening of party identification through repeated voting).

The greatest affective mass is generated, presumably, by the objects that evoke the most communication. That in turn depends partly on frequent recurrence of the object on the public agenda, and its high salience when on the agenda. For example, a regular electoral cycle places partisan divisions before the public, and would obviously contribute to the stability of party identification; interruptions, or changes in the party system, would lessen it (Converse, 1969). The same should be true for controversial social groups like the Huguenots, Jews, blacks, or untouchables, to the extent that public controversy about them remains recurrently salient over many years. Longstanding religious, national, or tribal enmities should also contribute to stable preferences, such as those in Northern Ireland, Yugoslavia, or the Michigan-Ohio State football rivalry. Contrariwise, attitudes should, over the long run, be less stable when their objects are infrequently salient, such as (for Americans) toward a distant and unpublicized country like Iran, or relatively obscure groups like Greek-Americans, or very specialized issues like appropriations for basic science.

Practice depends on an attitude object that frequently evokes an overt response. A regular electoral cycle demands repeated voting acts, which should stabilize partisan preference. Also, the norm in America is to

discuss elections a good bit before and after each one. This practice too should stabilize partisan attitudes. In contrast, Americans rarely make any overt response at all toward the Supreme Court, so practice should not contribute much to stability of their attitudes toward that object.[1]

The Role of Political Campaigns

To sum up the argument to this point, we have suggested that attitudes toward different attitude objects must be distinguished before the question of persistence can usefully be addressed. It is most pertinent for those we have classified as "symbolic predispositions." For them, there is evidence for both a persistence model and an impressionable years model. The key difference between the two lies in the stability of late adolescents' attitudes, those who are passing from the preadult life stage to early adulthood. There is good evidence that they are exposed to unusual levels of pressure to change, on the average, in that stage of life. But how intrinsically strong and resistant to change are their attitudes? And what are the conditions for the socialization of strong, resistant, preadult attitudes? These are the empirical questions this study will address.

The theoretical analysis just presented suggests that the strongest attitudes will be socialized when communication on the issue is plentiful and affectively consistent. This implies that events in the political arena triggering massive communication will be most helpful. But it is not enough for the child to be exposed to balanced communications about an attitude object before he/she has a firm predisposition. That will just produce

confusion. Rather, the child must be in an environment that will insure one-sided communication.

The implication of this argument is that political socialization of strong attitudes is mainly generated by those political and social events that provide the occasion for largely one-sided political communication. It should therefore proceed in fits and starts, since those events are likely to be episodic, and thus the opportunities for socialization will likely be periodic rather than continuous. To understand political socialization, then, we need to look at (1) those occasions for political communication, and (2) attitudes toward attitude objects that vary in their ability to attract communication.

Presidential campaigns are among the most evocative of political events in this respect. The mass media give them great publicity over a long period of time. Primary elections insure an almost continuous dose of weekly headline news about the various candidates. The general election is usually the leading news story every day for several months. The contests also provide the occasion for considerable interpersonal communication; people often talk to each other about their candidate preferences, their evaluations of the candidates, the events of the campaign, and its issues.

For children, presidential campaigns are among the most intense of political information flows, therefore. But they are more. This heavy information flow occurs in a context in which the parents typically agree on a candidate and on partisan preferences more generally, and (less predictably but also usually) the child's peer environment is likely to be supportive as well. And children in late childhood and adolescence are less likely to be

exposed to the campaign in the mass media, which are more balanced, than are adults (see Comstock et al, 1978). So a presidential campaign ought to be a prime occasion for the socialization of strong partisan attitudes.

But the associated communication is not uniform across attitude objects. Its dominant content of course focuses on the candidates themselves. There is inevitably some secondary communication about the parties, since the two major clusterings of pre-convention candidates are categorized into the two parties, and the parties ultimately select one each for the final contest. But the primary focus is on the candidates ("Are you for Bush or Dukakis? What do you think of Dukakis? Is Bush really a wimp?") and only secondarily on the parties. We would have to expect that basic political ideology would also be discussed to some extent ("Is Dukakis really a Massachusetts liberal or not?"), along with the issues ("Would he raise taxes to reduce the budget deficit?"). But our suspicion is that the issues play a secondary role to the candidate focus. The evidence on the "horserace" character of media coverage supports that observation (e.g., Patterson & McClure, 1976; Orren & Polsby, 1986). And our suspicion also is that basic ideology, like party (and perhaps even more so) plays a background role. It is naturally invoked from time to time as a way of generalizing about basic concerns. But it is not a central, prominent feature of the debate.

Finally, it might be noted that although the candidates are the primary focus of campaign communication, they are relatively transient objects in the political firmament. The losing pre-convention candidates disappear from the scene early, some before the late primaries. The losing nominees presidential and vice-presidential, disappear immediately after Election Day.

And even the winning vice-presidential nominee soon is relegated to throttlebottomdom. In contrast, the parties, ideology, and issues remain as moderately salient features of the governing scene.

In this study we have three broad concerns. First, we are focusing on the presidential campaign as an occasion for political socialization. As will be seen, our study involves a three-wave panel, with interviews at the beginning of the 1980 presidential campaign, at its conclusion, and then again a year later. Our expectation would be that (1) partisan political socialization would show sizable gains in the first time interval, which the post-election year would simply stabilize, and (2) these gains would be most marked among the youngest children, and those with the most propitious balance of heavy information flow and poor initial information. Our study interviewed children from age 10 to age 17 to bracket these ranges most effectively, along with their parents as adult comparison points.

Our second concern is with differences across attitude objects. We would expect these campaign-driven gains to be most marked for indicators of attitudes toward the candidates, and least marked for attitudes about issues. Attitudes about the parties and about ideology would fall in between, presumably the former somewhat outstripping the latter.

If we propose that a presidential campaign is a major occasion for preadult political socialization, it must also have an agent. Our third general focus in this paper is on this question. Previous literature suggests that children in late childhood and early adolescence are more lkely to communicate with their parents, and late adolescents, with their peers. We would also expect that the child's exposure to political news in the mass

media would increase with age across this age range. Hence we would expect that (1) young children, in particular, would, through the course of the campaign, (2) become more accurate about their parents' political attitudes, and consequently, (3) more in agreement with them. On the other hand, among older children, the gains in partisan socialization described above might be sharper for those who are high in (4) political media exposure, and in (5) interpersonal communication. They (6) might not increase so sharply in their accuracy about parental attitudes, or agreement with them, because the campaign may not have so markedly increased their political communication with parents.

How do we index the increases in attitude strength that we refer to as gains in partisan political socialization? As suggested in earlier writings (see Sears, 1968b; 1975), one can distinguish two themes in the literature on socialization that address this question. One is that successful socialization trains the child to accept conventional social norms, whether those of the family, the social group, or the broader society; e.g., a religious family successfully implants a strict morality in their children, working class neighborhoods successfully implant pro-union, Democratic norms, or the Israeli nation successfully implants democratic, Zionist ideals. That is not our focus. The other is that successful socialization is manifested by the child's emerging into adulthood with a strong and coherent set of political values and attitudes, richly based in solid information, whatever the particular content of those notions. It does not matter so much <u>what</u> the child believes; what is important is that it be well-informed and thought through carefully.

We then propose three general categories of successful political socialization. One is information. A second is the willingness to take positions on political questions; this is indexed by opinionation. But mere opinionation could reflect the existence of "non-attitudes," as earlier writers have suggested. The third and most important category, therefore, is attitude strength. As already noted, here we have several indicators: intensity, consistency, power, and stability. Our predictions above would lead us to expect that all three categories of indicators would increase significantly across the course of the campaign, and then increase little in the year following; that such gains would be more marked for the younger children; and that they would also be most marked for those with the highest ratio of information flow to initial information flow.

Specific Predictions

In short, we would assume that (a) many children had uncrystallized partisan attitudes prior to the campaign, which would be reflected in inconsistent and non-intense attitudes at time 1. Consequently, (b) their partisan attitudes could be relatively unstable from time 1 to time 2. However, (c) if the campaign provided a significant socialization opportunity, their attitudes ought to be rather crystallized at time 2, as reflected in more intense, consistent attitudes at that point, with candidate preferences more reflective of underlying party identification, and they (d) would be moderately stable from time 2 to time 3. Overall, (e) their attitudes would then turn out to be quite unstable from time 1 to time 3.

Moreover, (f) these increases in intensity, consistency, power, and stability ought to be most marked for those who were exposed to most political communication in the campaign period, relative to their initial information level. And (g) we should see increases in accuracy of perceived parental positions, and in agreement with parents, as a consequence of the campaign (i.e., from time 1 to time 2, but perhaps not continuing from time 2 to time 3).

These effects should be greatest in those political content areas most likely to receive the benefit of increases in campaign-linked communication. Hence (h) they should be most marked for attitudes about the candidates, (i) somewhat less marked for party identification and ideology, and (k) less marked still for attitudes toward the issues of the day.

Before the Campaign

Our starting point is early in the 1980 presidential campaign, approximately at the time of the New Hampshire primary. At that point, preadult children were deficient by all our indicators. They were less informed about the campaign, and had fewer opinions about its constituent elements, than were adults. This is shown by the marginal frequencies in Table 1. The candidate information scale consists of the mean percent recognizing the major candidates (Reagan, Bush, Carter, Kennedy, and Connolly). At the beginning of the campaign, only about one-third of the youngest age group recognized the principal candidates. The same was true for the party scale, based on placements of the two parties' positions on aid

to minorities, environmentalism, and spending. And the same was true for the partisan symbols scale, based on 14 traditional symbols of the two parties.

[Insert Table 1 about here]

The youngest children were also less able or willing to express opinions than were the older children, who in turn were less opinionated than their parents. But their deficiencies in terms of opinionation were much less marked. E.g., only 12 percent of the youngest age group (10-11) were unable or unwilling to place themselves in terms of party identification, and almost everyone had an opinion about President Carter. On the other hand, there were substantial variations over attitude objects, as shown in Table 2. About one-third did not recognize Ronald Reagan, and 58 percent had no ideological preference.

[Insert Table 2 about here]

As the presidential campaign began, then, we see quite clearly that the youngest children were incompletely politically socialized. They had some information, and many opinions, but fewer of both than did older children or adults. And even those late adolescents are clearly incompletely socialized. Nevertheless, consistent with the findings of earlier research (e.g., Hess & Torney, 1967; Easton & Dennis, 1969), these children's levels of information and opinionation are not discontinuous with those of adults.

Rather, with age there is a gradual progression in information and opinionation. The question is whether or not the campaign was successful in reducing some of preadults' deficiencies in these respects relative to adults.

Simple Effects of the Campaign: Analytic Strategy

Our basic analytic strategy will be to test the effects of the campaign by comparing wave 1, conducted at the outset of the campaign, with wave 2, conducted at its conclusion. If the campaign were successful in socializing strong predispositions, our several indicators of attitude strength should increase markedly between the two waves. If the campaign is the primary socializing influence, no comparable gains should be observable between wave 2 and wave 3, conducted a year later. On the other hand, if any gains result from the simple passage of time and maturation, comparable gains should be observed from wave 2 to wave 3. It should be noted that this comparison is somewhat conservative in that it predicts larger changes in the first time period, which spans only nine months, than in the second, which spanned twelve.

Information and Expressed Opinions

Information Level

The first question is whether or not the cognitive content relevant to these predispositions increased as a result of the campaign. As already

indicated, at wave 1 there were marked age differences in information, as shown in Table 1. These were significant differences in information about candidates' party affiliations ($F=92.18$, 728 df, $p<.0001$); about the parties' issue placements ($F=5.24$, 728 df, $p<.002$); and in assigning various partisan symbols to the correct party ($F=116.81$, 728 df, $p<.0001$).

Information about the candidates was dramatically increased by the campaign for both groups of children, as shown in Table 1. For the youngest group, the mean information level rose from 39 percent to 63 percent. For the older group, it rose from 57 percent to 71 percent. There was a slight rise for the adults, but it was not a significant one. Overall, age significantly interacted with wave across the first two timepoints ($F=26.06$; 2/1456 df, $p<.0001$). That is, the preadults' information was dramatically enhanced by the campaign; the adults' only very slightly. However, Table 1 also shows no comparable increase in candidate information from time 2 to time 3, for any age group. As a result, at the end of the campaign the children's remaining deficiencies in candidate information had stabilized. This reflects a socializing impact of the campaign, and a major one. Their political socialization had proceeded a significant distance, by this criterion: they had about halved their informational shortfall. But their socialization was still substantially incomplete; the age difference remained significant ($F=42.36$, 3/728 df, $p<.0001$).

Information about the parties' issue placements shows a less clear gain as we had anticipated from the lower level of attention paid to issues than candidates during the campaign. Table 1 shows that all age groups made modest gains during the campaign, but there was no differential gain by

younger children. Moreover, these gains continued through the post-campaign year. As a result, there is a linear effect of time ($F=99.64$, 3/1456 df, $p<.0001$) but no interaction with age ($F<1$). We might speculate that the great publicity given to the Reagan Administration's bold initiatives in its first year provided continuing education for Americans of all ages on party differences in issue positions. The continuing gain should be interpreted as event-driven rather than as a product of age and maturation, given that even the youngest preadults overtake the initial knowledge of the adults, after just over 18 months.

Information about party symbols shows a very large age effect ($F=119.57$, 3/728 df, $p<.0001$), no doubt because they are heavily historical (Lincoln, FDR, LBJ, donkey, etc.). But gains across the campaign were smaller, even though statistically significant ($F=36.82$, 1/728 df, $p<.0001$). The younger age groups did gain somewhat more in both time intervals (interaction $F=5.27$, 6/1456 df, $p<.0001$), but the socializing effects of the campaign were quite modest. These party symbols are, of course, less salient aspects still in either a presidential campaign or daily political life in our era. With such minimal communication, information about them is likely to increase only very slowly over time.

The net result is that by the conclusion of the campaign, these children had increased their knowledge of the candidates quite dramatically, and were somewhat clearer about party differences on issues. These data are consistent with our main hypothesis, which is that political attitudes crystallize during the campaign, particularly among the young, and lie relatively fallow between campaigns. This puts the first piece of evidence

in place: this patterning holds true for the cognitive content of partisan attitudes. We will return to the question of the central role of the candidates as vehicles for the campaign's impact on preadults' political socialization.

Information as predisposition. A further implication of the hypothesis of crystallization during campaigns is that individual differences in information, like affective dispositions, ought to stabilize at the end of campaigns, particularly among the young. Such data are presented in Table 3. They show that the initial level of information among the young is not very stable; wave 1 candidate information is correlated .47 with wave 2 information. But note the stabilizing impact of the campaign: information levels are considerably more stable from wave 2 to wave 3 (.60). The same pattern occurs even more strikingly for information about the parties' positions; wave 1 information only correlates .14 with wave 2 information, but rises to r=.32 for wave 2 to wave 3. Similar but smaller changes occur among late adolescents, and no such changes occur among adults. Very little change at all occurs in the stability of information about party symbols, as would be expected from their low profile during the campaign.

In short, again we have a pattern of crystallization among the young as a consequence of the campaign, but little change thereafter, or in either case among mature adults. At the end, age differences in stability still hold, but they are markedly diminished; indeed, they are more than halved in the cases of campaign-relevant information: candidates; parties, and party issue placements.

[Insert Table 3 about here]

What is the implication of the differences here across domains of information? Political campaigns revolve, in their manifest content, principally around the candidates. The parties are leitmotifs, though ubiquitous. Aligning oneself with a candidate in the end means aligning oneself with a party, however temporarily, but the candidate is figure and the party is ground. In the short run, then, candidate information increases markedly. Once the campaign is over, information about the losers presumably disappears altogether, while the winner remains in the news. But the underlying impact on the parties, which persist in their longstanding and publicized conflict, remains, and may even continue to increase. So the campaign is an occasion for socialization of basic partisanship, both because the parties play some role in campaign content (though not the central one), and because the candidates are temporary partisan symbols. The candidates do an important job in helping to socialize partisanship, even though their role quickly vanishes from the stage.

Note also how long it takes to generate stable knowledge of party symbols. This is not something accomplished even as well as the socialization of party issue differences by a campaign; it would seem rather to be age and experience over the longer term is necessary for that.

Frequency of Affect

We have discussed the level of information, and now we turn to level of opinionation. Put another way, from the frequency of the cognitive

component, we turn to the frequency of the affective component. To test for this, we simply counted the percent of items in each of the four attitude domains to which the individual expressed an opinion (as opposed to "don't know" or "no opinion"). By this criterion, the youngsters look quite well socialized to begin with. With respect to candidates, over 83 percent of the children, and 87 percent of the adults, initially expressed an opinion, on the average, a non-significant difference. This increased slightly with the campaign, to 92 percent each, and again a year later, to 94 percent. Even this small change yields a significant wave effect, given the small error variance in this dimension ($F=70.61$, $p<.0001$). And the increase was slightly greater for the children, as reflected in a significant interaction ($F=4.08$, 6/1456 df, $p<.001$).

The same was true for the party identification questions. Initially, 85 percent of the children expressed a party preference, which increased to 90 and 92 percent at the next two waves. The adults went from 92 percent to 93 percent, yielding significant age ($F=17.08$) and wave ($F=10.75$, both $p<.01$) effects. Concerning self-placements on issues, the children began even more freely opinionated than the adults, starting at 94 percent and going to 95 percent; the adults, 90 percent to 91 percent. Both age ($F=11.07$) and wave ($F=8.21$) effects are significant.

Having said all that, plainly most everyone, children and adults alike, freely expressed opinions from the beginning, in each of these domains. The minor increases that did occur, while statistically significant, were small in absolute terms. The disparity between young children's lack of information and their free expression of opinion leaves open the possibility,

then, that their attitudes are in reality largely "non-attitudes," consistent with the critiques cited earlier by Vaillancourt (1973) and others. These data raise the same suspicions They make it even more important to go beyond the preliminary analyses of earlier researchers to an assessment of the underlying strength of preadults' attitudes.

Attitude Strength

This pattern, described earlier as "opinion without information" (Lane & Sears, 1964) or affect without comparable accompanying cognitive content (Sears, 1969), could reflect a non-attitude. But we must be cautious. In fact it indicates nothing about the intrinsic strength of the attitude, which is our primary focus. Presumably poorly-informed attitudes can be just as strong and resistant to change as well-informed ones. This happens frequently with attitudes adopted without much information as a part of social influence processes; e.g., from parents or groups to which we are passionately attached. The question is rather, how strong is that affect?

Method

Most of our discussion of attitude strength rests on a variety of statistical treatments of a common set of items in each of the four domains. In the area of candidate evaluations, these involved five-point like-dislike scales on Carter, Reagan, Bush, Kennedy, and Connally. Three items were used in assessing party identification: the standard Michigan seven-point scale, Dennis' "party supporter" scale (1987), and a composite sale composed of

separate items on trusting Democrats and trusting Republicans. The ideology scale was based on three items, trust of liberals and trust of conservatives, and a standard ideological self-identification item. The partisan issues scale was based on five Likert-type issue items, two of which were pro-Republican (building more nuclear power plants and spending less money on things like health and education), and three, pro-Democratic (protecting the environment, giving special treatment to women in getting jobs, and reducing spending for defense and armed forces). The first two were reversed to give all items a common partisan direction. Three other items of similar format -- on the legalization of marijuana, giving blacks special treatment in getting jobs, and a judgment that America was right to fight in Vietnam -- were not included because a factor analysis of all preadults revealed that they did not load on the same factor as the five partisan items that were used.

Affective Intensity

Our first crack at this question leads us to the intensity of the attitude, which is one indicator of underlying affective strength. To measure this, we computed intensity scales in each of our four attitude domains where the data were available by folding the individual item scales at the middle and averaging across items. Specifically, for intensity of candidate evaluations, strong like/dislikes received 3, moderate, 2, both like and dislike 1, and don't know or never heard, 0. These were averaged over the five candidates. The data are shown in Table 4.

With respect to intensity of candidate evaluations, the young were initially least intense ($F=5.88$, 3/728 df, $p<.001$). At wave 2, the age differences are no longer significant. Overall there is a wave effect ($F=56.45$; 2/1456 df, $p<.0001$), with, again, the increases in candidate intensity during the campaign being larger than those in the year following. The greatest gains are again shown by the young, as indicated in a significant age x wave interaction ($F=2.89$, 6/1456 df, $p<.001$).

[Insert Table 4 about here]

The impact of the campaign on the intensity of children's party identifications is even more marked, as shown in Table 4. There are large increases in intensity during the campaign for both groups of children, and none for adults, and none for either group after the campaign. This is strong support for our hypothesis of the socializing effect of the campaign (for age, $F=3.89$, $p<.001$; for wave, $F=3.04$, $p<.04$; and for the interaction, $F=3.36$, $p<.002$). A similar pattern held for ideology. Children had less intense ideologies at the outset, and indeed these age differences held up throughout. All age groups' ideologies increased with time ($F=10.88$, $p<.0001$). Again the preadults increased most, as shown in Table 4 (interaction $F=2.78$, $p<.01$).

On the other hand, on partisan issues, the children were actually somewhat more strongly opinionated than adults, and that difference actually enlarged with time (for the age x wave interaction, $F=2.19$; 6/1456 df, $p<.05$).

Attitudinal Power

A second implication of a strong attitude is that it will determine attitudes toward newly arising attitude objects to which it is cognitively linked. This is a central proposition of the cognitive consistency theories (e.g., Osgood & Tannenbaum, 1955). In contemporary American political behavior, the most widely documented case of this is the power of longstanding party identifications over candidate evaluations and voter choices (Campbell et al, 1960). So we start with that example.

To test for the power of party identification over candidate evaluations, we created a scale in which the respondent received +1 for each match of party identification with candidate evaluation (e.g., a Democrat who liked Carter, or who disliked Reagan), -1 for each case in which they were opposed (e.g., the Democrat disliked Carter, or liked Reagan), and 0 for cases of ambivalence. These were summed across the five candidates (Carter, Reagan, Kennedy, Bush, and Connally), and then averaged.

The power of party identification over these candidate evaluations increased considerably over the course of the campaign, as shown in Table 5. There were continuing modest increases in the year following, but the major increase occurred during the Campaign Year ($F=53.45$, 2/1024 df, $p<.0001$, for the wave effect). The increases were particularly marked for the younger respondents. They showed significantly less powerful party identifications prior to the campaign ($F=3.31$; 3/512 df, $p<.02$). By the end of the campaign, these age differences had actually reversed, such that the youngest respondents showed the strongest party-lining of candidate evaluations

(though the differences were not significant). The overall age x wave interaction approached significance ($F=2.07$, 6/1024 df, $p<.06$). As can be seen from Table 5, the most important component of that interaction, the particularly great increase in party identification power during the campaign by the pre-adult respondents, is highly significant.

[Insert Table 5 about here]

Attitude Stability

A third implication of a strong attitude is that it is stable over time (Converse, 1964; 1970). To test for attitude stability, we constructed scales in each of our four domains of partisan attitudes. The candidate evaluation scale averaged the partisanship of the respondents' evaluations of the same five candidates discussed above. The party identification scale averaged the partisanship of the three items cited earlier: the ideology scale averaged the three relevant ideology items, and the partisan issues scale utilized five issues items summed and averaged.

Our hypothesis is that preadults' partisan attitudes crystallized over the course of the campaign, and then showed little further increase in attitude strength over the post-campaign year. If that is correct, we should see relatively low attitude stability among preadults over the course of the campaign, since their attitudes would have been developing. However, if little further socialization was occurring in the relatively quiet post-campaign year, their attitudes should have been quite stable over that period.

This hypothesis receives fairly strong support, as can be seen in Table 6. There are marked age differences in stability across the campaign period; e.g., the oldest adults having quite stable candidate evaluations (r=.70), whereas the youngest preadults were quite unstable (r=.37). These age differences were diminished quite noticeably after the conclusion of the campaign: over the following year, older adults' candidate evaluations were still quite stable (r=.72), but even the youngest preadults had almost caught up (r=.60). Put another way, the oldest adults' attitude stability increased by only r=+.02 from the first to the second period, while the youngest preadults increased by r=+.23.

[Insert Table 6 about here]

Again we find evidence that preadults' party identifications crystallize more slowly through the campaign than do their candidate evaluations, and indeed seem to remain somewhat in flux in the year thereafter. Preadults' ideology, starting from a far lower baseline (r=.04 for the youngest of them during the campaign), rises to meet the level of attitude strength set by party identification by the conclusion of the study. Attitudes toward partisan issues again show very little campaign socialization effect.

Domain Differences

A central proposition in our theorizing is that the gains in socialization induced by the campaigns ought to be most marked in attitudes about the candidates, but perhaps fleetingly so, since most pass from the

scene after the campaign. Party and ideology are less salient during the campaign, and so will perhaps show less dramatic gains then. But as more lasting elements in the political arena, and more lasting dimensions by which to comprehend and evaluate the flow of political persons, issues, and events, they might hold their gains better after the campaign is over. We would expect less evaluations of issues to show less gain, because of their complexity and relatively background status in conventional political debate.

The data on affective intensity, presented in Table 4, support this set of expectations rather well. The largest increases in intensity of candidate evaluations occur among the youngest preadults (and young adults, to be sure) during the campaign, with less increase during the following year. The interaction is significant, as we have said. The increases in intensity of issue evaluations are greater during the campaign than in the year thereafter, but the preadults actually wind up more extreme than the adults, suggesting that what is increasing is the expression of non-attitudes.

The hypothesized pattern of domain differences is even clearer with respect to attitude stability, as shown in Table 6. The increases in stability are much greater for the youngest preadults' candidate evaluations than for older respondents' attitudes. Yet party identification did not show such dramatic gains during the campaign, nor did ideology (except for the youngest preadults, who seem almost universally to have had "nonattitudes" in this realm initially). Continuing development in these domains seems to be the rule. And finally gains are barely noticeable for partisan issues, in any age group. It might be noted that issue attitudes were quite inconsistent despite one artificial boost: the five issue items were all

adjacent to each other, separated by just one other item, so item proximity was optimal. (The same was true of candidate evaluations, but not the party and ideology items). In short, we have found several respects in which preadults increased attitude strength markedly during the campaign, but not thereafter, and their parents do not show comparable campaign effects. This pattern held particularly for candidate information, affective intensity, and stability, and for party identification and ideology. It also held particularly for the younger children. On the other hand, there are some indications of other slower, yet more durable and continuing increases. Party issue-placement information, information about party symbols, and stability of party identification are the clearest cases here. So one might argue that the parties, less salient during the campaign, show longer term and continuing effects, while the candidates are more ephemeral. And by all indicators we see little change in the strength of attitudes toward partisan issues; these simply seem not to be very salient to preadults either during campaigns or thereafter. Indeed there is some evidence that many of the preadults' expressed opinions about partisan issues are in fact "nonattitudes."

Caveats

Each indicator of attitude strength discussed above -- affective intensity, power, and stability -- is potentially susceptible to other interpretations.[2] Intensity could, as we have indicted, simply indicate the free and untrammeled expression of non-attitudes -- though that would not be the case for the other two indicators. The power measure could simply

reflect the tendency of uncertain partisans to express conviction-less statements of party preference that fits their presidential candidate preference (though to be sure that would be power of another kind). The stability measure would be a more conservative test of attitude strength if it considered stability of response to a single item rather than stability of the aggregated response to several items. However it might underestimate real stability by failing to control for error of measurement. And all three could potentially be reflecting attitude strength "by proxy," in the mode discussed in The American Voter (Campbell et al, 1960). That is, children may simply be learning to mimic adults' patterns of attitudes, rather than developing strong attitudes of their own. We will take up the role of parents in a later section, which hopefully will illuminate that issue.

What are alternative explanations for this pattern of data? One is that the increased attitude strength among the young could reflect the effects of being interviewed, rather than those of exposure to the campaign. The NES panel studies have sometimes been described as simply "an expensive course in civic education" for panel respondents, and perhaps this panel study served that same purpose. Indeed we have argued elsewhere (Sears, 1983) that overt practice of a particular response will contribute to the persistence of the underlying predisposition that generates it.

This cannot be rigorously assessed in the absence of a control group with no wave 1 interviews. But it should be noted that the big gain occurred in the second interview; the additional, third, interview added little in attitude crystallization. And the gains were not equal across age groups, even though all experienced the same amount of interviewing. Nor were the

gains the same across attitude domains, though presumably practice was constant. So one would have to have a fairly subtle theory about the shape of the learning curve to predict this pattern of findings. Hopefully a more direct test of this possibility will be generated in future analyses which vary exposure to the campaign among people with the same interview experience.

Parental Role

We hypothesized that the increased attitude strength during and after the campaign would be due to increased political communication, which provides the opportunity for social influence as well as attitude crystallization. The parents' role in this process is no longer regarded as the all-powerful one it one was (see Jennings & Niemi, 1974). Nevertheless, the home is one place such communication can take place. So we would expect that children's accuracy about parental positions would increase, particularly during the campaign.

Second, it is now clear that ignorance rather than recalcitrance is the primary obstacle to parental political influence, especially in early adolescence (Tedin 1975; Jennings & Niemi, 1974). So we would expect the child's agreement with parental positions to increase; especially during the campaign, and that this agreement would be closely linked to the increase in accuracy.

Finally, we would expect domain differences of the kinds specified earlier: campaign effects would be most marked for candidate evaluations;

more general and continuing gains would be seen for party identification and ideology; and there would be minor gains for partisan issues.

Accuracy

We will present data on the child's perceptions of parental ideology, since our analysis is as yet incomplete for other domains. An accuracy index was constructed by subtracting the child's perception from the parent's actual position, both on three-point scales (liberal, middle of the road, conservative). Table 7 shows the data (note that the raw scores have been reflected so that high scores indicate greater accuracy). Overall, there is a marginally significant increase in accuracy, over the entire time period ($F=3.70$, $p<.06$). The younger children were in fact less accurate than the older ones prior to the campaign ($F=16.63$, $p<.0001$). The difference diminishes somewhat, though it remains significant, at the end of the campaign ($F=5.06$, $p<.05$) and a year later ($F=4.87$, $p<.05$; all on 1/344 df). The age x wave interactions is not significant ($F=1.30$, 2/688 df, $p<.30$). So there is some suggestive evidence on this dimension, though it is not very strong.

[Insert Table 7 about here]

Agreement

The second panel of Table 7 shows a similar pattern of increased agreement with parents over time ($F=2.98$, 2/626 df, $p<.06$), with the largest increase again taking place during the course of the campaign itself. The

younger children consistently show less agreement with their parents than do the older ones (F=6.34, 2/313 df, p<.02. The difference diminishes somewhat with time (F=3.27, p<.08 at wave 1, and F=1.62, ns, at wave 3; both 1/313 df), though the age x wave interactions is non-significant.

The increased accuracy plays an important role in the enhanced agreement. When wave 2 accuracy is entered as an additional factor in the analysis of variance, it has a substantial main effect (F=10.79, 2/304 df, p<.0001), with both age (F=8.75, 1/304 df, p<.004) and wave (F=3.48, 2/608 df, p<.04) continuing to have significant effects. But, as can be seen in Table 8, almost the entire increase occurs during the campaign itself. In short, the campaign, particularly, and the political debates of the year following, both contributed to greater accuracy of children's perceptions of parental ideology. That accuracy in turn produces greater agreement with parents, presumably because it enhances parental influence.

Domain Differences in Agreement

Finally, Table 8 presents the agreement data for the candidate and issue domains (our analyses of party identification are incomplete). Consistent with our previous results on domain-differences, the candidate evaluation domain shows its largest increase among the youngest preadults and during the campaign itself. As a result, the age x wave interaction is significant (F=3.12, 2/700 df, p<.05). The two main effects are not.

As already indicated, the data on parent-child agreement in ideology follows the same pattern as in earlier areas of our analysis -- the younger children are less likely to agree than the older children (because of their

ignorance), but both groups increasingly come to agree with their parents' ideology, even after the campaign is over.

Finally, the data on partisan issues shows no real difference or change. None of the effects are significant. Again, little political socialization seems to occur about partisan issues during or after the campaign.

Communication

Our hypothesis about the media of effective communication was that the younger children would be more influenced by communication within the family, while older children would be increasingly influenced by the mass media.

To test this, we constructed three scales, based on factor analyses of the relevant items. The family political communication scale was based on three items (how often do you talk politics with your parent, how much does he/she encourage you to question other people's opinions about politics, and how much does your parent care what you think about politics?). An interpersonal political communication scale was based on three items (how often do you talk with other people about national politics, how often do you talk with people whose ideas about politics are different from yours, and is national politics something you like to talk about or is it something other people bring up?). A political television exposure scale was based on four items (how many days this week did you watch national news on television, how much attention did you pay to news on TV about national politics and government, how many hours in average weekday do you watch TV, and how often do you watch local late evening news?).

To test the effects of these various types of communication, we conducted a median split on each scale (among preadults only) and then compared those high and low in attitude strength. We used wave 2 measures of communication most centrally because that provides the best index of exposure to the campaign. For purposes of illustration, our measure of party power over candidate evaluations is treated as the dependent variable in Table 9. The entry is the difference in party power between those high and low in the type of communication indicated. For example, the children aged 10-13 high in family communication at wave 2 had a mean level of .87 on the party power scale at wave 2, while those low in family communication had a mean level of .30. The difference, .57, is entered in Table 9 as the effect of wave 2 family communication on their wave 2 party power scores.

[Insert Table 9 about here]

The overall pattern of the results is that family communication during the campaign period had its greatest effect on the younger children, whereas television viewing had its greatest effect on the older children. Interpersonal communication had the same effect on both age groups.

Specifically, the family communication scale had an overall interaction with age, such that the younger children were more influenced by it across all three waves ($F=5.87$, 1/254 df, $p<.02$). Consistent with our hypothesis, the evidence indicates this effect is greatest during the campaign. The effect of family communication was greater for the younger children on the party power index at both waves 1 and 2, but not wave 3 (interaction

F's=6.08, 4.77, and 1.05, respectively). Moreover, classifying children in terms of their family communication at waves 1 or 3 had no such effects (F,1 for all interactions). In short, only family communication measured at the end of the campaign has predictive value, and it contributes to attitude strength for younger (10-13) preadults, but not older adolescents.

Interpersonal communication (measured at wave 2) simply has an overall main effect: the more preadults talked politics with other people, the stronger their attitudes, irrespective of age (F=14.94, 1/254 df, $p<.0001$). In this case the main effect is significant on the party power index at each time point (F=5.53, 16.67, and 5.66, respectively, all on 1/254 df, $p<.02$). Again the effect is somewhat specific to the campaign period: interpersonal communication measured at wave 3 had no such effect (though measured at wave 1 the main effect was significant: f=4.68, $p<.04$).

The political television scale (wave 2) had a main effect on party power across all three waves (F=5.51, $p<.02$), with the older children showing somewhat greater effect (interaction F=3.29, $p<.08$, both on 1/254 df). The greater effect on older children increased over waves, but the three-way interaction was not significant. In this case, political television continued to have an effect beyond the campaign: measured at wave 3, it had a significant effect on the wave 3 party power index, but not on party power measured earlier (wave x TV interaction F=5.38, 2/508 df, $p<.005$).

In short, we find evidence here that various kinds of communication contribute to the strengthening of these children's partisan attitudes. The younger children are more influenced by family, older children by television, and both by interpersonal communication. And the effects tend to be somewhat

specific to the campaign period; relatively high levels of exposure to political communication do not have the same impact before or after the campaign. The campaign provides a superior occasion for political socialization.

Conclusions

We have presented evidence that a presidential campaign provides the occasion for a substantial increment in preadults' political socialization. That socialization has been indexed both by their levels of political information, opinionation, and attitude strength (or crystallization). In a number of respects we have shown that these increased sharply over the course of the campaign, and then stabilized in the period thereafter. This jump in level of political socialization occurred more for the younger children than for older ones or for parents. It occurred most notably with respect to partisan evaluations of candidates, as the primary content of the campaign. But it occurred as well for the more enduring predispositions implicated in the campaign: party identification and ideology.

The second part of the paper examined the agents by which this campaign-based increase in political socialization occurred. We report some evidence that the campaign provides a special opportunity for parents to communicate politically with their children. This communication increases the accuracy of the children's perceptions of parental political attitudes, the level of their political agreement with their parents, and, in turn, the strength of their own partisan predispositions. This facilitation of parental political

socialization of their children worked most powerfully for younger children. For older children, the campaign provided an unusual opportunity for political television to strengthen basic political attitudes; the family was no longer so effective.

These findings are treated as one case of a more general process by which political events stimulate political communication selectively and discontinuously. Communication helps to strengthen and crystallize basic predispositions. But the strengthening of basic political predispositions in this intermittent fashion leads to major differences between attitude objects in their ability to engender attitudes that persist over the long-term. The strengthening of preadults' basic political predispositions triggered by events such as presidential campaigns is a key to understanding the question of long-term attitudinal persistence.

Footnotes

1. Cognitive factors are no doubt also important. The earlier essay (Sears, 1983) discussed them in some detail, but they are peripheral to the empirical work treated here, so they might simply have been mentioned in passing. Presumably persistence depends partly on the attitude object's having constant meaning over time. Constant meaning is more likely when the attitude object is itself in reality quite stable. For example, the quite dramatic and visible postwar upward mobility of such ethnic groups as Jews and Asian-Americans must be considered as a factor in the lessened prejudice against them; the objects have changed, along with attitudes toward them. Social consensus on the meaning of the object can also stabilize its meaning, as the symbolic interactionists have long maintained. For example, "Negroes" evoked widely shared stereotypes from the earliest days of slavery at least through World War II. Presumably this longstanding consensus helped maintain stable prejudices among American whites through this period. Everything else being equal, constant meaning should also depend in part on its being a simple, manifest, and concrete object, rather than a complex, diffuse, subjective one. Finally, an attitude's cognitive connectedness to other attitudes also should contribute to its stability. If an attitude is part of, or at least consistent with, a broader schema or belief system, it should be more likely to be stable.

2. The fourth indicator of attitude strength, consistency across related items, will be considered in separate analysis at a later time.

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Table 1

Information, by Age and Wave

	Wave			Change	
	1 - Early 1980	2 - Late 1980	3 - Late 1981	t_1t_2	t_2t_3
Candidate's Party Affiliations					
Age					
10 - 13	39.1%	62.9%	62.5%	+23.8%	-0.4%
14 - 17	57.1	70.8	68.2	+13.7	-2.6
28 - 41	78.9	87.0	82.6	+8.1	-4.4
41 +	84.6	86.1	87.2	+1.5	-1.1
Party Issue Placements					
Age					
10 - 13	38.2	45.5	56.5	+7.3	+11.0
14 - 17	44.2	51.5	62.3	+7.3	+10.8
28 - 41	49.8	60.0	69.1	+10.2	+9.1
41 +	49.8	58.6	68.4	+8.8	+9.8
Party Symbols Identification					
Age					
10 - 13	32.7	39.6	42.8	+6.9	+3.2
14 - 17	45.1	48.4	55.7	+3.3	+7.3
28 - 41	65.0	69.1	69.8	+4.1	+0.7
41 +	72.0	73.3	75.5	+1.3	+2.2

Note: Entries are mean percent accurate in identifying candidates' political parties (five items), parties' issue positions (three items), and parties associated with certain political symbols (fourteen items).

Table 2

Initial Frequencies of Party Identification, Ideological Preference, and Candidate Evaluations, by Age (Wave 1)

	Age					
	10-11	12-13	14-15	16-17	28-40	41+
Party Identification						
Democrat	16.4%	16.7%	23.1%	20.6%	20.0%	25.4%
Leaning Democrat	7.5	18.2	19.2	17.5	15.2	11.4
Independent	6.0	4.5	5.1	12.4	16.4	9.2
Leaning Republican	17.9	18.2	16.7	16.5	9.7	11.9
Republican	40.3	34.8	20.5	17.5	23.6	28.1
Subtotal	88.1	92.4	84.6	84.5	84.8	85.9
Other	11.9	7.6	15.4	15.5	15.2	14.1
Ideology						
Liberal	7.6	9.9	10.9	25.7	13.6	10.0
Middle of the Road	23.9	19.8	34.8	36.6	43.8	45.3
Conservative	8.7	17.3	14.1	12.9	29.0	29.5
Subtotal	42.4	48.2	49.8	75.2	86.3	85.8
Other	13.0	8.6	7.6	5.0	3.4	2.1
Never/DK/NA	44.6	43.2	32.6	19.8	10.3	12.1
Subtotal	57.6	51.8	40.2	24.8	13.7	14.2
Jimmy Carter						
Like	80.5	82.7	80.5	75.2	63.7	70.0
Dislike	19.6	16.0	18.4	17.8	25.6	24.7
Don't remember	0	6.1	1.1	7.0	10.7	5.2

Table 2 (continued)

	10-11	12-13	14-15	16-17	28-40	41+
Ronald Reagan						
Like	44.6	62.9	55.4	55.4	50.0	61.6
Dislike	22.8	19.7	27.2	32.6	37.5	33.7
DK/Don't remember	32.6	17.3	17.4	11.9	12.5	4.7
N	92	81	92	101	176	190

Note: A small number of cases in which candidates were "liked and disliked" are omitted.

Table 3

Stability of Information, by Age and Campaign Phase

	Over the Campaign (t_1 x t_2)	Post-Campaign (t_2 x t_3)	Difference
Candidate's Party Affiliations			
10 - 13	.47	.60	+.13
14 - 17	.60	.68	+.08
25 - 40	.61	.65	+.04
41 +	.73	.71	-.02
	.26	.11	
Party Issue Placements			
10 - 13	.14	.32	+.18
14 - 17	.35	.40	+.05
25 - 40	.48	.52	+.04
41 +	.50	.43	-.07
	.36	.11	
Party Symbols Identification			
10 - 13	.44	.47	+.03
14 - 17	.67	.73	+.06
25 - 40	.80	.80	0
41 +	.85	.83	-.02
	.41	.36	

Note: Entry is the test-retest Pearson correlation for each information scale.

Table 4

Affective Intensity, By Age and Wave

	Wave			Change	
	Pre-Campaign	End of Campaign	Late 1981	t_1t_2	t_2t_3
Candidate evaluations					
10 - 13	1.74	1.93	2.03	+.19	+.10
14 - 17	1.81	1.90	1.98	+.09	+.08
28 - 40	1.97	2.17	2.22	+.20	+.05
41 +	2.17	2.15	2.29	+.02	+.14
Party identification					
10 - 13	1.53	1.74	1.68	+.21	-.06
14 - 17	1.57	1.54	1.58	-.03	+.04
28 - 40	1.44	1.53	1.53	+.09	+.00
41 +	1.61	1.59	1.53	-.02	-.06
Ideology					
10 - 13	1.10	1.37	1.29	+.27	-.12
14 - 17	1.39	1.43	1.56	+.04	+.13
28 - 40	1.41	1.48	1.51	+.07	+.03
41 +	1.44	1.43	1.49	-.01	+.06
Partisan issues					
10 - 13	2.00	2.11	1.29	+.11	+.07
14 - 17	2.08	2.17	1.56	+.09	+.05
28 - 40	1.98	2.03	1.51	+.05	+.06
41 +	1.96	2.08	1.49	+.12	-.04

Note: The entry is the mean affective intensity score, where strong feelings = 3, moderate feelings = 2, ambivalence = 1, and no opinion = 0, averaging over five candidates, four party items, three ideology items, and five issues, respectively.

Table 5

Power of Party Identification Over Candidate Evaluations

	Wave			Change	
	Pre-Campaign	End of Campaign	Late 1981	t_1t_2	t_2t_3
Age					
10 - 13	-.47	.39	.48	+.86	+.09
14 - 17	-.22	.36	.40	+.58	+.04
28 - 40	-.14	.29	.41	+.43	+.12
41 +	-.05	.20	.38	+.25	+.18

Note: The entry is the consistency of each candidate evaluation with respondent's party identification, summed over five candidates. A high score indicates a high level of consistency.

Table 6

Stability of Partisan Attitudes, by Age and Campaign Phase

	Over the Campaign (t_1 x t_2)	Post Campaign (t_2 x t_3)	Difference
Candidate Evaluations			
10 - 13	.37	.60	+.23
14 - 17	.44	.56	+.12
28 - 40	.59	.76	+.17
41 +	.70	.72	+.02
Party Identification			
10 - 13	.36	.37	+.01
14 - 17	.23	.38	+.15
28 - 40	.81	.82	+.01
41 +	.85	.85	0
Ideology			
10 - 13	.04	.34	+.30
14 - 17	.39	.43	+.04
28 - 40	.62	.44	-.18
41 +	.65	.64	-.01
Partisan Issues			
10 - 13	.25	.30	+.05
14 - 17	.43	.48	+.05
28 - 40	.65	.56	-.09
41 +	.55	.55	0

Note: The entry is the test-retest Pearson correlation for each partisan attitude scale.

Table 7

The Parental Role in Socializing Ideology

	Wave			Change	
	Pre-Campaign	End of Campaign	Late 1981	t_1t_2	t_2t_3
Accuracy of Child's Perception of Parental Ideology[a]					
10 - 13	.59	.70	.79	+.11	+.09
14 - 17	.95	.90	.98	-.05	+.08
Difference	.36	.20	.19	-.16	-.01
Parent-Child Agreement on Ideology					
10 - 13	.14	.32	.43	+.18	+.11
14 - 17	.44	.61	.63	+.17	+.02
Both	.31	.51	.56	+.20	+.05
Agreement By Wave 2 Accuracy of Perceived Position					
10 - 13: Low accuracy (n=65)	.09	.11	.38	+.02	+.27
10 - 13: High accuracy (n=32)	.38	.78	.88	+.40	+.10
14 - 17: Low accuracy (n=70)	.19	.33	.51	+.14	+.18
14 - 17: High accuracy (n=52)	.73	1.12	.94	+.39	-.22

a. High score is greater accuracy.
b. High score is greater agreement.

Table 8

Parent-Child Agreement, by Domain

	Wave			Change	
	Pre-Campaign	End of Campaign	Late 1981	t_1t_2	t_2t_3
Candidate evaluations					
10 - 13	.79	.82	.84	+.03	+.02
14 - 17	.83	.82	.83	-.01	+.01
Partisan Issues					
10 - 13	.85	.86	.86	+.01	0
14 - 17	.86	.85	.87	-.01	+.02

Note: High score is greater agreement.

Table 9

Effects of Type of Political Communication During Campaign (Wave 2) on Party Power over Candidate Evaluations

	type of Communication (Wave 2)		
	Family	Interpersonal	Television
Party Power (Wave 1)			
10 - 13	.54	.37	.21
14 - 17	-.48	.40	.39
Party Power (Wave 2)			
10 - 13	.57	.80	.16
14 - 17	-.44	.71	.64
Party Power (Wave 3)			
10 - 13	.23	.53	-.09
14 - 17	-.29	.45	.83

Note: Entry is difference in party power over candidate evaluations (see note to Table 5) between those high and low in type of communication (Wave 2) specified.